



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

XXIII.—*The Races of the Nile Basin.* By SIR SAMUEL
WHITE BAKER.

Read July 10th, 1866.

THAT great historian, general, and legislator, Moses, first cradled on the river Nile, gave us the book that describes the world's creation and the origin of man: that first man, Adam, created 4004 B.C., 5870 years before the present day. We are thus bound to accept as *historical* fact, that all the varying and conflicting types of the human race spread over a surface of the world at that time utterly unknown (and even now not completely known), originated in one man, Adam; and in the comparatively short space of 5870 years the human race that commenced with a unit has entirely lost its individuality, and has divided into numerous and distinct types or families, differing in language, colour, and in physical conformation.

As the account of the Creation was written by Moses, and he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," that account is peculiarly interesting, as emanating from one brought up in the land of Egypt, which was at that period the centre of civilisation and learning. . . . It is not my province on the present occasion to inquire into the difference between the Mosaical period allotted as the origin of the human race, and the far greater antiquity claimed by the Egyptian priests; we have merely to examine the inhabitants of the Nile Basin, and to show how much was actually known to the wisdom of the Egyptians, and how many tribes were positively and utterly unknown at the time when the history of the Creation was recorded.

The Egyptians at the mouth of the Nile Basin depended entirely upon the Nile, but they vainly sought its source; that source was buried in obscurity; in regions so distant that every speculation upon the mysterious origin of the river was a fable. Thus, combined with the complete ignorance of those secluded lands that shrouded the Nile sources, was also the ignorance of all that related to those lands; of the plants that thrive in those fertile regions far beyond the barren deserts of Egypt; of the animals that wandered over those grassy plains; and of those races of *man* that, hidden and unknown, occupied Equatorial Africa at the sources of the Nile.

The Basin of the Nile extends from the 3° south lat. to 32° north. The drainage to the Nile is included between long. E. 22° and 39°, and lat. 3° south to 18° north. This enormous area of

about 1,255,000 square geographical miles, is inhabited by many races; some who have migrated from the east coast of the Red Sea (the Arabs), others who have settled by conquest, and those towards the southern limit of the Basin who form the original inhabitants of the country. The Egyptians and the tribes of the Lower Nile I omit from my description, and I shall merely notice those races occupying the Nile Basin south of the 18° north latitude.

The Arab tribes of Nubia include the Bishareen, Haddendowa, Hallonga, Ialeen, Shookarēya, Dabaina, Kunāna, Hamrān, and some others. All of these tribes are nomadic, wandering with their flocks to various localities at particular seasons according to their necessities for pasturage. Arabic is the language common to all except the Haddendowa and Hallonga; these tribes speak a language perfectly distinct from Arabic, it is therefore probable that they are the original tribes of the Nubian desert prior to the settlement of Arabs who crossed the Red Sea.

There is no distinguishing feature among these Arab tribes that would suggest a separate type; each tribe has a peculiar fashion for dressing the hair, beyond which there is no difference either in appearance or dress. All are Mahommedans, which religion extends to about the 15° north latitude. They are ruled by sheiks, all of whom are responsible to the Egyptian government for the tribute due by their tribe. Their wealth consists exclusively of camels, cattle, and goats, which are pastured in the small valleys where rank grass and low mimosas appear at long intervals unexpectedly in the desert. Although their country is the burning wilderness of sand and glowing mountains of bare rock, there is a peculiar interest in residing with these people, as they have never changed. Their manners, customs and appearance remain unaltered, and the present is the picture of the ancient past; the children tend the flocks, and the women go to the well morning and evening with pitchers that have never changed the fashion of several thousand years. By the well-side the traveller may sit at sunset and watch the young girls and women of the tribe arriving at the spring, as the servant of Abraham thus waited for the coming of Rebekah.

Time will not permit me to touch upon the manners and customs of these people; the races of the Nile Basin would require more than a single volume to describe them even partially—the Arabs extending beyond the Blue Nile, the Abyssinians embracing that magnificent country of lofty mountains from which the great Eastern Nile affluents spring, and the black races of Senaar on the south bank of the Blue Nile—those Ethiopians who filled the slave markets of Egypt and Constantinople.

All these races were known to the ancients, including the

tribes and kingdoms on the west bank of the Nile, extending to Kordofan and the territory of Darfur, which, after the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs, became Mahomedan. But there was a limit to the progress of the ancient explorers. Upon the Blue Nile there are Egyptian antiquities, believed to be coeval or anterior to the pyramids of Lower Egypt; but upon the White Nile not a stone marks the site of former settlements; not a ruin remains to attest that once a nation existed, that has passed away;—all is wilderness; not the dreary desert of burning sand that was a barrier to advancing armies, upon which the bones of the Persian troops had bleached, but a still more formidable obstacle of nature had cut off the south from the invader, and from civilisation. Over the deserts parched with the withering simoom the thirsty camel continued on his way, the ship of the desert on a sea of sand; but who or what could penetrate the mysterious White Nile?—that region of marsh and pestilence, that sickly flat, cursed as an infernal Styx!—where in the countless windings of the stream through regions of interminable swamps it was vain to seek a resting-place. As the vast Nubian desert appeared to bear a curse in its parched desolation, the river flowing through a dreary world of sand, so the south bore its watery curse; not a dry spot, morasses, reeds, mosquitos, fevers, an adverse current, to the horizon a stagnant marsh. Not only for a day's journey, neither for a month's, but the marsh appeared to last for ever, and the baffled centurions of Nero returned with the description of the "*paludes immensas*" that gave birth to the mighty Nile, but through which no man could cleave his way. Not the dreaded deserts of Africa, but the *marsh* was the barrier to an advance from the north; thus that portion of the world ever unknown has been unreckoned in the earth's history.

Strange does it appear that, however unfitted certain localities may be for human existence, there are few portions of the earth that are not tenanted, and although animals and fishes are generally adapted by nature to the localities they inhabit, so man is found without those adaptations, wandering as a savage naked and wild through the miserable solitudes of the White Nile; a human being born to exist in misery where the crocodile, hippopotamus and mosquito are in their paradise, and where man is represented by so abject and low a type that the mind repels the idea that he is of our Adamite race.

In this short paper I must confine myself to a description of those tribes which appear to have been completely shut out from the world's history, barred out, from the earliest ages, from the rest of the world by that mysterious entangled river and interminable marsh, which resisted not only the explorer and invader, but seems to be a barrier to the belief in God; beyond which

miserable swamp there is no belief in a Supreme Being, no creed, and man is a mere brute.

The most northern tribes of the White Nile are the Dinkas, Shillooks, Nuehr, Kytch, Bohr, Aliab, and Shir. A general description will suffice for the whole, excepting the Kytch. Without any exception, they are without a belief in a Supreme Being, neither have they any form of worship or idolatry; nor is the darkness of their minds enlightened by even a ray of superstition. The mind is as stagnant as the morass which forms its puny world.

The men are perfectly naked, apparently not knowing that they are so; the girls, up to the age of about fifteen, are also entirely naked, after which period they wear a slight fringe of a few inches in length. They are physically strong, exceedingly tall, and muscular. They build small circular huts, congregate in villages, and generally cultivate a small amount of grain (*dhurra*) on the drier portions of their land. There is no actual negro type, excepting the woolly hair. The forehead is rather low, the head broad, the back of the skull heavy; but neither is the jaw prominent, nor are the lips extraordinarily full, nor is the nose flattened.

They possess large herds of cattle, which they never kill, contenting themselves with bleeding them periodically, sometimes drinking the blood raw, sometimes boiling it. Milk is their chief diet, invariably mixed with cow's urine. They catch game in pitfalls; spear fish with harpoons, by casting at random; and they are continually at war with neighbouring tribes, owing to razzias upon their herds. They have no laws of marriage, the number of a man's wives depending upon his wealth in cattle, a wife being invariably purchased for her value in cows.

This may be accepted as a general outline of the tribes bordering the White Nile. They are armed with lances, some with bows and arrows, clubs of iron wood; and they are governed by chiefs, none of whom appear to have much control over their subjects. Glass beads, and both copper and iron rings, iron hoes, and lance-heads are the common articles of barter. They work in iron, forming lances, arrow-heads carefully barbed; and they prepare charcoal for smith's work. Their ornaments consist of beads, iron rings, with which the women load their ankles, and strings of rounded pieces of river-shells, wound round their waists and necks.

In some countries, such as the Shir, where no iron ore exists, the arrow-heads are formed of ironwood. The absence of articles and weapons of metal in no way proves their excess of savagery. Having no metal to work, there are no blacksmiths. The hard wood supplies the want of iron, as the hard stone is used by the New Zealanders, and as flint stones formerly served for arrow-heads.

The Kytch tribe is the exception to all others in abject misery and in the lowest stage of savagedom. They never cultivate, probably owing to the miserable marsh, which would render it impossible. Thus they are dependent upon fishing and trapping for their existence, neither of which appears to be productive, as the natives are a race of skeletons. They wander like storks over the country, searching for lizards, mice, snakes, locusts, and white ants. Hours are spent in digging field-mice from their burrows. The men are of course naked, and their hair is stained red by a thick plaister of cow-dung and wood ashes, the change of colour being the effect of the potash. The women are equally naked as the men, not having even the slight attempt at clothing common among other tribes. Should a man become old, his eldest son occupies the place of his father in the domestic establishment, and succeeds to his parent's wives. Nothing can be lower in the human race than this wretched tribe; there is hardly a remove in advance of the chimpanzee, except in the power of speech.

On the 5° N. latitude the Bari tribe commences. An improvement in the locality is accompanied by a corresponding advance in the tribe. Instead of the desolate marsh inhabited by the miserable Kytch, the country is dry, the morasses have ceased, and park-like grounds, diversified by mountains, entirely change the character of the scene. The Bari tribe is extremely numerous and powerful. The men and women are tall and muscular. The mountains are rich in iron ore, and the natives are celebrated blacksmiths. They smelt the ore, and work most beautiful lance-heads, although they have no other tools than a hard stone for a hammer and an anvil, a cleft stick of green wood serving in lieu of tongs; the fibrous bark of a tree, with hard sand and water, completes the finish, instead of a file.

The Bari are so renowned for the manufacture of spades or hoes (all of which have the exact form of our "ace of spades" upon playing cards), that a considerable traffic is carried on between them and the tribes of the interior, the Bari spade being exchanged for ivory, which is sold to the Arab traders from Egypt for cattle, the latter being plundered from their neighbours.

The soil in the neighbourhood of Gondokoro is poor, and the Baris use manure for their crops. This fact proves a remarkable degree of intelligence among savages, and is a rare exception. The men are like all others, naked, but the women are slightly protected by leather aprons nearly a foot in length; the wives of the chiefs wear aprons of iron mail delicately worked in minute rings. All these people are rich in vast herds of cattle. Their villages are seldom large, but exceedingly numerous and beauti-

fully clean. A circular courtyard of about 100 feet diameter is cemented with clay and cow-dung, and carefully swept several times during the day—this yard is surrounded by a live fence of impenetrable euphorbia ; small circular granaries supported upon piles contain their corn and beans, thus protected from the white ants. Their huts are like those of all African tribes, circular, having a low doorway of about two feet high like the entrance to a dog kennel. It is a singular fact that as the circle appears to afford the readiest form for the bird's nest, so all the wild tribes of Africa have adopted this shape for their dwellings ; not one tribe that I have met with has sufficiently advanced in architecture to construct a window. I attach considerable importance to this fact, as it proves a tenacious conservatism to old established usages that suggests an extreme antiquity of race. As various birds construct peculiar nests, the shape of each class never varying, and the form of the nest proclaiming the species of the builder, so the dwellings of the various tribes although all circular have their distinguishing peculiarities which never alter. As birds and insects adhere to peculiar forms for their dwellings which must have been the original forms from the time of the creation, so these wild tribes in Central Africa preserve the specific patterns of their savage architecture as unchanged from the beginning as the cell of the wasp and bee.

Leaving the warlike Bari tribe, we find, eighty miles to the east, the powerful tribe of Latooka, totally distinct in feature, language, and customs. Instead of the bows, and barbed and poisoned arrows of the Bari, they are simply armed with the lance and shield. Equally devoid of a belief in a Supreme Being they firmly believe in sorcery and the power of rain-making, which is supposed to belong to the chief. This tribe is far superior to those near the White Nile in intellectual capacity. They cultivate largely, are good hunters, exceedingly brave and warlike, and live in considerable towns containing several thousand houses. Although their huts are circular and the entrances like dog holes, the roofs are totally different to any I have ever met with ; these are extremely high, about twenty feet, and at an angle of about 70°, like candle extinguishers. They have an extraordinary custom of exhuming the bodies of those who have died a natural death, and exposing the bones upon the surface at some spot outside the town ; while those who have been slain in fight are allowed to remain where they fell. I was quite unable to trace the origin of this custom ; at first I imagined that it had some faint connection with a belief in a resurrection, but from a conversation that I had with the chief Commoro, who was a rare exception among savages in acuteness of intellect, I was forced to abandon the idea.

The Latookas had a peculiar head-dress, their own hair being felted and woven during a period of eight or ten years until it assumed the form of a helmet, growing upon the head; this so far completed, was covered with a plating of coloured beads, and ornamented with a crest and peak of polished copper. As the various Arab tribes in Upper Egypt are distinguished by a peculiar fashion in dressing the hair, so are the equatorial tribes of Central Africa; the hair-dressing being an object of superlative vanity. Without any exception in the countries I have visited in Central Africa, the tribes that are entirely distinct from each other are distinguished by a particular head-dress, in all cases accompanied by a totally distinct language; thus, those tribes that simply vary in dialects, wear a similar head-dress, as the Madi and Obbo; but the Bari, Latooka, Madi, Lira, and Unyoro being distinct in language, are equally distinct in head-dress and in the pattern of their huts. This is a curious fact accompanying their conservative principles in architecture; each tribe is entirely different from the other, although occupying a comparatively insignificant area. South-west of Latooka, on a plateau elevated 3,600 feet above the sea, the Obbo and Madi tribes present a sudden variety from the Latookas. Instead of the vast herds of cattle and powerful stockaded towns, they possess smaller herds and less important villages; the huts differing in form although still circular, and the hair of the natives woven into a flat mass like a beaver's tail, stiffened with thongs of raw hide, and turned up behind with a tuft made of ostrich feathers at the extremity.

The features of the Madi are peculiar in the finely-shaped noses, many having a delicately arched bridge; the women are generally good-looking, rather less clad than those of the Latooka and the Bari.

The Madi extend to lat. N. $2^{\circ} 50'$, from that point to lat. $2^{\circ} 15'$ there is a tract of prairie uninhabited, owing to the wars between them and various tribes to the east of the prairie route (the Langgo and the Umiro). Those tribes speak the language of Lira and wear their hair accordingly in a distinct pattern, matted into a felt wig reaching below the shoulder-blades, very similar to that of a Lord Chancellor's, but smeared with a cement of blue clay carefully chased in patterns by the aid of a long thorn.

Upon reaching the western bend of the Nile in N. lat. $2^{\circ} 15'$, a sudden and extraordinary change takes place in the tribe of Unyoro. The river is the boundary of naked savagedom; crossing the ferry to the south bank, we arrive among people differing totally in their appearance and habits from all those we have left to the north; we are startled by our arrival in a kind of semi-civilisation that is the more striking by its sudden contrast with

the wildest savagedom. This country, Unyoro, governed by a king, an unflinching despot, exhibits a degree of order and arrangement unknown to the northern tribes. The entire country is divided into districts separately governed by chiefs appointed by the king, all of whom are responsible for the taxes imposed upon their provinces. Death or torture are the punishments inflicted by the king for the most trivial offences, and the country is ruled by terror to such an extent that the name of Kamrasi is generally connected with a pantomimic action of drawing the finger across the throat.

Nakedness is considered a disgrace, and both men and women are carefully clothed with bark cloth or with beautifully prepared skins as soft as chamois leather, cut into squares, and neatly sewn into mantles. The natives make their own needles, and form their thread of the plantain fibre; they are excellent smiths, using iron hammers instead of the rude implements of stone of the more savage tribes; they draw wire, and construct excellent knives and lances; they work fine braid of plantain fibre; produce very superior pottery, and their agricultural implements are a great improvement upon those of other tribes. They cultivate the ground with extreme care, producing sweet potatoes, plantains, varieties of beans, Indian corn, sesame, dhurra, tullaboon (a variety of grain), and prepare an excellent flour from the fruit of the plantain that I have never met with elsewhere. Tobacco is grown by every tribe and is in general use, each tribe having a pipe of a distinct shape. The natives of Unyoro are exceedingly particular in their arrangements for smoking, using long pipe-sticks, and frequently indulging in double pipes, two bowls being united to a single stem; thus, two qualities of tobacco can be smoked at one time.

The superiority of the Unyoro over all northern tribes is especially exhibited in the form of their huts; these are circular, but very large and lofty, having an entrance of six or seven feet high, with a small portico in front instead of the dog-holes of the Latookas and Madi, etc.

The labour of cultivation is performed by the women. The men are generally tall and good-looking—not so dense a black as the northern tribes—with peculiar exceptions of both men and women, who are merely a dark brown. Kamrasi, the king, is of the latter colour. This fact suggests the idea that a mixture of races may have taken place at this point, especially as the sudden change from nakedness to clothing can hardly be attributed to accident, but would appear to have been a custom introduced from the south, in which direction towards Zanzibar the tribes are more or less clothed. At the same time it should be borne in mind, that the extreme elevation of the country, about 4,000

feet, and corresponding decrease of temperature, may have prompted clothing.

On the borders of the Albert N'yanza, on the west of Unyoro, the inhabitants are perfectly black, as are likewise those on the western shores of the lake in the country of Mallegha. The difference of colour is exceedingly perplexing. Were the colour uniform it might be attributed to some local influence, but the want of uniformity warrants the conclusion of a mixture of races. Where the art of writing is unknown, traditions must be extremely vague; but I gathered sufficient to prove that for many years war had been carried on upon a scale far more extensive than the petty razzias of the northern tribes, and large tracts of country had changed hands, which fact may account for the mixture of races.

Although the country of Unyoro was far in advance of all others of the White Nile in government and civilisation, there was the same moral darkness and ignorance of a Supreme Being. A belief in sorcery—in prognostications of coming events by certain signs detected in the entrails of fowls sacrificed for that purpose, was all that the natives depended upon. Professional witches and wizards were in attendance upon the king, to be referred to on every occasion of importance.

Beyond the country of Unyoro, south of the equator to 3° lat., are the countries of Uganda and Karagwe, visited by Speke and Grant. Those countries have been in communication with Zanzibar by means of the Arab traders from a remote period, from whom the ancients may have obtained a knowledge of the existence of two great lakes, as recorded by Ptolemy, from which sprang the mighty Nile. Beyond this fact all was unknown. All attempts to penetrate Nilotic Africa from the north had failed, while those from the south or east had been limited to the vicinity of the equator. Vague and strange reports had been brought of these strange lands occupied by the "man-eating Ethiopians," coupled with the existence of the two vast lakes which fed the Nile, and wild and exaggerated as those fables sounded, we have proved that they were not altogether fabulous. The lakes so long hidden now have the footprints of Englishmen upon their shores, and no longer mythical and nameless, they represent the reign of Victoria upon the hitherto blank map of Central Africa. The "man-eating Ethiopians" also exist no longer as a fable, but are represented by the Makkarika tribe west of the Albert Lake. These people, again, perplex the ethnologist by their peculiar and independent type. Totally different from all other tribes in language, features, and general appearance, they inhabit the country west of the Nile beyond the Niambara between the 2° and 5° N. lat. They are not positively black, the

men not absolutely naked ; their features are pleasing, and their general conduct friendly ; nevertheless they are cannibals. Not only do they differ from the adjoining tribes by man-eating, but they have a peculiar propensity for dog-eating. I saw a number of these men last year on my return to Gondokoro, they had arrived as ivory porters with the traders from the interior. I was immensely struck with them as being so entirely different from any tribes either north, south, or east of the Nile. It would be perfectly impossible in the limited notice this evening to give more than a general description of the numerous tribes that inhabit the Basin of the Nile.

In a comprehensive view of the Nile Basin we find that the Abyssinian affluents which have formed the delta of Lower Egypt, (the Atbara and Blue Nile) spring from a land inhabited by a superior race, the only independent Christian country in the whole of that vast continent of Africa ; a race far removed from savagedom, where reading and writing are not uncommon among the people, and where the features and form of the inhabitants are closely allied to the European ; where the women are not only lovely, but have hearts and warmth of affection equal to those of our own homes ; a land that may at some future time become thoroughly civilised. This exalted state of feeling in a country hitherto excluded from general association with the civilised world, is a grateful proof of the humanising influence of Christianity in a position and circumstances where little could be expected. On the other hand, as we view the Great White Nile from its sources and throughout its entire course, it flows through a land of barbarians without a belief in God ; where man is a mere animal, and where woman is merely the female of the male brute ; woman in sex, without one of those natural virtues that we almost expect as instincts ; no feeling of love, no affection for either husband or child. Exceptions exist, but they are few to this distressing rule.

That land of wildest savages cut off from the whole world by a geographical position so distant and so secluded as to be unattainable, appears to stand aloof from the earth's history. Those numerous tribes, all differing in type and language, inhabit a portion of the earth so primitive in geological formation, that no change appears to have taken place since it was originally tenanted by animals and man. Thousands of feet above the ocean, this plateau of equatorial Africa, formed of granitic rocks, has never been submerged ; no change, either by water or by volcanic action, seems to have disturbed the original form that this portion of the globe assumed ; thus man, if he existed in those regions at that remote beginning, must be the savage man that exists at the present time. As animals and insects preserve the

habits of their species unchanged from the Creation, so these various tribes have preserved the individuality of their savagedom, each with the fashioned hut as shaped by its ancestors, never to be altered until the bee shall change the fashion of its cell.

Every phase in the history of the Adamite creation is linked with a belief in God, but where is the creed of Central Africa? These hitherto unknown races of the Nile Basin have been as obscure as the Nile sources; but as that vast river has poured down its cataracts from the beginning, so the roar of those falls has sounded in the ears of savage tribes upon its borders, and these tribes have never known the name of God; they have never been linked in that chain of evidence that binds us to the belief in an Adamite creation. Are these races the result of that historical creation when God said "let us make man in our own image?" or are they descendants of a family as ancient or of greater antiquity than those whose arrow-heads of flint excavated from the drift are the testimony of the existence of pre-historic man?

I do not presume to lay down a theory, but at the same time it is impossible to witness the barbarous White Nile races which have been entirely excluded from the history of the human race, without reflecting, that, as the Nile sources have been but recently laid down upon the hitherto blank chart of Central Africa, even so the savage races of the Central Nile Basin have now for the first time appeared upon the page of history; thus, both the sources of the river and the races of men being pre-historic, upon what evidence can we claim the co-relationship with the wild savage of the Nile Basin? can we venture to date from one common origin, and claim him as a "man and a brother?"
